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Broadside Ballads and Occupational Identity in Early Modern England

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Broadside Ballads and Occupational Identity in Early Modern England

Mark Hailwood

ABSTRACT The relationship between occupations and identity remains underexplored for the early modern period. This essay makes a case for the utility of seventeenth-century ballads to the study of that relationship. First, it outlines how ballad discourses assigned stock characteristics to various trades in ways that would have influenced external processes of identity formation. Second, it questions what these sources can tell us about internal occupational identity by examining issues of authorship and consumption. The essay concludes that ballads can be a valuable source for historians seeking to more fully appreciate the operation of early modern occupational identities. KEYWORDS: expressions of occupational identity; early modern guild rituals; Thomas Lanfire; Richard Rigby; Joseph Bufton

IN HIS 2009 BOOK, *The Ends of Life*, Keith Thomas asserts the centrality of work to the formation of early modern identity; because most people spent the majority of their waking hours working, he says, it was "almost impossible to throw off an occupational identity" outside of those hours. As a result, men "usually looked to their work as the source of their sense of identity."[1] It seems a reasonable enough claim, yet historians of identity for this period have rarely taken occupations as their starting point. The roles of religion, officeholding, marital status, wealth, education, degree of financial independence, a sense of belonging to civic or parish institutions: all have been explored as important foundations of individual and collective identities to an extent that occupation, as yet, has not.[2] This essay is one of a series that attempts

1. Keith Thomas, *The Ends of Life: Roads to Fulfilment in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2009), 106–8. The present essay is principally concerned with male occupational identity. I plan to write an article on female work-based identity, with a particular focus on spinners.

2. See the essays in *Identity and Agency in England, 1500–1800*, ed. Henry French and Jonathan Barry (Basingstoke, U.K., 2004).

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to explore this topic through an engagement with seventeenth-century broadside ballads.[3] Indeed, whatever the reasons for the relative lack of emphasis put on occupational identity by historians of early modern England, it seems decidedly odd to anyone approaching this period through an analysis of ballad material. Here, occupational identity is an organizing feature, and characters are routinely identified by occupational labels. Tinkers, tailors, and shoemakers, for instance, appear as social types, with associated stock characteristics. The notion that occupation defines an individual is treated as a given in ballad discourse.

Broadside ballads therefore provide a valuable entry point for learning how occupational identities were constructed in this period. Indeed, ballads played an important role in the process of identity formation itself. For example, as components of a broader cultural discourse about the characteristics of different types of workers, ballads undoubtedly contributed to what we might call *external* processes of identity formation: the ways in which occupational groups were understood by others. Moreover, occupational ballads may have contributed to *internal* processes of identity formation. They offered portrayals of occupational types that workers in those trades are likely to have identified with, especially when they were celebrated. Occupational groups may even have played an active role in composing ballad portrayals of themselves, or at least in adopting and performing them as direct expressions of their identities.[4] To examine how occupational ballads influenced these processes, we need first to outline the various subgenres of ballad in which occupational identity features prominently and consider how such genres were intended to function. The following list is not intended to be exhaustive, and there is some degree of overlap between the subgenres, but we can usefully identify a few key categories.

First, occupational types were deployed in what we might think of as "character portrait" ballads; such ballads were closely related to the character literature that was in vogue in the early seventeenth century and most famously associated with John Earle's *Microcosmographie.* Character portrait ballads listed social types, usually with just one or two pithy lines about their key characteristics. For example, "A Merry New Catch of All Trades" reels off a series of occupations: "The Taylor sowes, the Smith he blowes, / The Tinker beates his pan: / The Pewterer ranke, cries tinke a tanke tanke."[5] "Every Mans Condition" details the chief love of different occupational types:

> The Smith loves his Hammer,
> And the Captaine his Drummer,
> The Soulder loves a good blade,

3. See also Mark Hailwood, "Sociability, Work and Labouring Identity in Seventeenth-Century England," *Cultural and Social History* 8, no. 1 (2011): 9–29; and "The Honest Tradesman's Honour: Occupational and Social Identity in Early Modern England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 24 (2014): 79–103.

4. For external and internal processes of identity formation, see Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London, 2004), 21–23.

5. "A Merry New Catch of All Trades" (1620), Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge (hereafter PL), Pepys 1.164-165, EBBA 20072.

The Pedler his packe,
And the Collyer his Sacke.[6]

It has been suggested that these types of character lists may have been intended as "nursery rhymes" for children.[7] Yet as Christopher Marsh has demonstrated, there was often more to these ballads than their apparently simple style initially suggests. "A Merry New Catch," for instance, seems to have a bawdy undertone. It is set to a tune, "The cleane Contrary way," that had previously been used for a well-known song about cuckoldry, and many of the lines can be read as innuendo: "The Weaver thumps," "The Butcher prickes," "The Glover pokes." Moreover, the woodcut image depicting a man in an oversized codpiece suggests that the ballad was intended to carry bawdy associations.[8] "Every Mans Condition" was furthermore intended to have a humorous tone: whatever other types loved, the refrain goes, "the Welchman he still loves an Onyon." The ballad also includes punning wordplay: "The Dutchman loves Beere, / And the Beareward his Beare." The ballad ends by encouraging the listeners to buy "good strong ale" for those who penned and performed the ditty, suggesting it aimed to elicit mirth from an audience of alehouse-going tradesmen rather than inhabitants of the nursery.

Character portrait ballads were often playful and humorous, but the listing of occupational types and their characteristics could take on a more sober tone where they shaded into the genre of social complaint ballads. A classic example of this is the ballad "Knavery in All Trades," which complains that "Plaine dealing now is dead" and that all tradesmen have grown deceitful and dishonest. The ballad declares:

One tradesman deceaveth another,
and sellers will conycatch buyers,
For gaine one wil cheat his own brother,
the world's full of swearers and lyars.[9]

"The Plow-Mans Prophesie" offers a common variation on the theme, reeling off a list of social complaints that would be put right in a coming golden age, though the twist was that such an age would descend "when the devil is blind"—an early modern equivalent to hell freezing over.[10] The reputation of tailors tends to fare particularly badly in

6. Llewellyn Morgan, "Every Mans Condition, or every Man has his severall opinion, Which they doe affect as the Welchman his Onion" (1630), PL, Pepys 1.220-221, EBBA 20100. The reference to "sack" here may be a pun on a liking for wine, which was commonly referred to as sack in this period.

7. Natascha Wurzbach, *The Rise of the English Street Ballad* (Cambridge, 1990), 207–8.

8. Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2010), 297–99.

9. "Knavery in All Trades, or, Here's an age would make a man mad" (1632), PL, Pepys 1.166-167, EBBA 20073.

10. "The Plow-Mans Prophesie, or, The Country-mans Calculation. By this you may perceive when it will be, None will be covetous, but all men free; When these things come to pass you'l find it' plain, No covetousness in England will remain. But in the mean time I am of that mind, They all will happen when the Devil is blind" (1664–1703), PL, Pepys 4.297, EBBA 21959.

these kinds of ballads, not least because of the opportunity for puns on the words *cabbage*, which meant the offcuts of material that tailors could appropriate from their customers, and *hell*, the name given to the place in a tailor's shop where such offcuts were thrown. "The Plow-mans Prophesie" describes a topsy-turvy world in which "Taylors forget to throw Cabbadge in hell, / And shorten their bills, that all things may be well." "Knavery in All Trades" also points the finger at cabbage-hoarding tailors:

> The Taylor can never live well,
> as many men plainely perceives,
> Unlesse he have gaines from hell,
> or lives upon Cabidge leaves.

Other trades appeared in these ballads, too, and alongside attacks on pilfering tailors, millers, tapsters, and victuallers were routinely accused of using false measures. There seems, then, to have been a particular anxiety and concern with those engaged in the retail and processing trades, and these occupational groups were far less likely to receive positive portrayals in ballad literature than those engaged in more straightforward production or manufacturing activities.[11]

Occupational descriptors were also a common feature in ballads about marital relations, courtship, or sexual relations. Lists of different occupational types frequently appeared in such ballads, which often assumed a "female voice" to assess the relative merits of different craftsmen as potential husbands. Some such ballads focused principally on the ability of different tradesmen to act as patriarchal providers and so compare their economic prosperity. Others, more entertainingly, put the emphasis on their sexual prowess. "The Wanton Maidens Choice," for instance, features a maid in her prime who wants to marry considering the merits of various occupational types. The blacksmith is one of several men who are passed over:

> He often will be Drinking,
> he has a Spark lies in his Throat:[12]
> And then at night he has no power,
> there's nothing to be got,
> God help that Woman I do say,
> that Weds a Drunken Sot.

The laurels in this ballad go to a tinker, or "metal-man," as the maid refers to him, for:

11. This distinction was also mirrored on the early modern stage: see Ronda Arab, *Manly Mechanicals on the Early Modern English Stage* (Selinsgrove, Pa., 2011). Laura Caroline Stevenson has argued that both merchants and artisans were coming to be seen in a more positive light in the popular literature of the period: see her *Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Literature* (Cambridge, 1984).

12. Smiths were commonly associated with drinking because of the hot and thirsty nature of their work.

He has a Bag of Tools I swear,
and bravely he can them use,
I am made go to't, he needs must do't,
I can him not refuse.[13]

There was not necessarily a consistent pattern as to who came out on top, so to speak, in such ballads: in others, blacksmiths were praised as the most fitting marriage partners. The ranking of the virility of different occupations seems to have owed as much to their amenability to a fitting pun as to any particular association with sexual prowess.

The ballads listed so far tended, then, to reference a range of different trades, attributing to them stereotypes—some pejorative, some positive, many jocular—that give us some sense of the associations contemporaries often made between occupations and the types of individuals engaged in them. Another important subgenre of occupational ballads took a different approach, focusing on a particular trade and celebrating its workers in a wholly positive way, in an effort to "flatter the heroic self-image" of that group.[14] Some trades fared particularly well here. Shoemakers, for instance, were the subject of a number of ballads praising the trade, nicknamed "the gentle craft"; "The Glory of the Gentle-Craft," "The Cobler's Corrant," "A New Song in Praise of the Gentle-Craft," and "Round-Boyes Indeed, or The Shoomakers Holy day" all drew on a tradition of heroic shoemaker literature that also found expression in the stories of Thomas Deloney and the plays of Thomas Dekker.[15] Few trades seem to have had quite the rich tradition of the shoemakers, but blacksmiths were not short of praise: "The Bonny Black-Smiths Delight" is "A Noble Song in praise of the Black-smiths. Setting forth the excellency of their Trade, the rareness of their qualities, their love to their Friends, and their kindness to their Neighbours."[16] Another occupation that received dedicated praise in ballad print was weaving, and this sometimes extended to the related cloth-making trades of fulling and combing, though not necessarily to spinning, which was usually undertaken as piecework by women. An example,

13. "The Wanton Maidens Choice, No Landed Men nor Farmers are for she, She delights not in that Wealthy Company: No Taylors, Joyners, Gentle-Craft, or any, But a thumping Tinker that can pay her Cunny" (1671–1702), PL, Pepys 3.190, EBBA 21203.

14. The phrase is taken from John Walter, "Faces in the Crowd: Gender, Youth and Age in Early Modern Protest," in *The Family in Early Modern England*, ed. Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster (Cambridge, 2007), 107.

15. On shoemaker literature and shoemaker ballads, see Alison A. Chapman, "Whose Saint Crispin's Day Is It?: Shoemaking, Holiday Making, and the Politics of Memory in Early Modern England," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (2001): 1467–94; and Angela McShane, "'Ne sutor ultra crepidam': Political Cobblers and Broadside Ballads in Late Seventeenth-Century England," in *Ballads and Broadsides in Britain, 1500–1800*, ed. Patricia Fumerton and Anita Guerrini, with the assistance of Kris McAbee (Farnham, U.K., 2010), 207–28.

16. "The Bonny Black-Smiths Delight, or, A Noble Song in praise of the Black-smiths. Setting forth the excellency of their Trade, the rareness of their qualities, their love to their Friends, and their kindness to their Neighbours" (1663–74), PL, Pepys 4.264, EBBA 21925.

"A New Coppy of Verses of the Weavers Loyal Resolution," declares that "The Weaver at all times firmly stood, / And would Work or Fight for his Country's Good."[17]

A number of key features appeared regularly in these celebratory ballads. Origin myths and patron saints or gods were often mentioned. Shoemaker ballads referenced Saints Crispin and Crispianus, persecuted early Christian princes who, according to legend, fled oppression and preached by day while maintaining themselves by shoemaking at night. Also prominent was St. Hugh, another noble who had forsaken his high status and maintained himself by shoemaking.[18] Blacksmith balladry drew on a connection to Vulcan, the Roman god of fire, who was claimed as the great ancestor of the trade. Indeed, "The Bonny Black-Smiths Delight," alluding to the genre of marriage-partner ballads, proudly claims that "The fairest Goddess in the skyes, [Venus] / To marry with Vulcan did advise, / And he was a Black-smith grave and wise."[19] Weavers also had a patron saint, Bishop Blaise, who was credited with teaching the English to comb wool.[20] Another common feature of such ballads was an emphasis on the courage, and specifically on the military traditions, of the trades. "A New Song in Praise of the Gentle-Craft" declares that "the Shoomakers of old, / most valiant hearts did bear, / Who feard no men by Land or Sea" and that all members of the craft would willingly fight for England's cause.[21] "The Weavers Loyal Resolution" asserts that these craftsmen were also eager soldiers who would "March for France, / And there we'l lead Monsieur a Dance."[22] Some of these ballads at the same time pilloried those trades that were seen as cowardly; there were multiple versions of a ballad under the heading of "The Maidens Frollicksome Undertaking," which recounts how six maids in drag pressed a group of tailors to go to sea, only for the tailors to display a distinct lack of stomach for fighting.[23] These ballads also praised trades for their love of hearty social drinking. "The Jolly Porters" claims that members of that trade "should love Mirth better than Money, and prize Strong Beer before Small."[24] "Round Boyes

17. "A New Coppy of Verses of the Weavers Loyal Resolution" (1689), PL, Pepys 5.138, EBBA 22405. This example is in fact a white-letter or roman-font ballad, and it seems to be the case that weavers were increasingly finding their voice in print toward the end of the seventeenth century when this typeface was becoming more common.

18. See Chapman, "Whose Saint Crispin's Day Is It?"

19. "The Bonny Black-Smiths Delight."

20. Notebooks of Joseph Bufton of Coggeshall, c.1677–1716, T/A 156/1, vol. 2 and vol. 3, fols. 8–9, Essex Record Office.

21. Richard Rigby, "A New Song in Praise of the Gentle-Craft" (1684–95), PL, Pepys 4.233, EBBA 21893.

22. "A New Coppy of Verses of the Weavers Loyal Resolution."

23. "The Maidens Frollicksome Undertaking, To Press Fourteen Taylors, With the Success of that Comical Adventure" (1689–92), PL, Pepys 4.276, EBBA 21937. The focus on military prowess as a key component of occupational identity seems to come to prominence at the end of the seventeenth century, when occupational identities may have become more explicitly militarized and politicized.

24. "The Jolly Porters, Or, The Merry Lads of London. Whose kind Advice to their Fellow-Brethren is, That they should love Mirth better than Money, and prize Strong Beer before Small" (1675–96), PL, Pepys 4.292, EBBA 21954.

Indeed" states that shoemakers "get our livings by our hands, Then fill us beare at our commands," and the blacksmith was commonly cited as a champion good fellow who, drawn to the alehouse by the dry throat induced by his hot work, gained renown there for his generosity and his jovial company.[25]

These ballad celebrations no doubt appealed to the members of such trades and certainly offered them a heroic image to identify with. But can we say that workers not only identified with such portrayals but actually participated in creating or authoring them? Or that they enthusiastically adopted such ballads and performed them, so that they became part of a purposeful expression of occupational identity? Both of these questions are very difficult to answer definitively, but an exploration of what evidence we have can provide some tentative conclusions. Identifying ballad authors is, of course, particularly tricky, but in the case of occupational ballads, a reasonable amount of evidence survives. A number were authored by the ballad great Martin Parker.[26] We know relatively little about the life of this author, so it is far from straightforward to know whether he had any deep connections to the trades he celebrated, other than through his encounters with them through his own sometime occupation as an alehouse keeper.[27] Another candidate for an "artisan author" is Richard Rigby, the subject of a recent article by Angela McShane.[28] Rigby can be identified as the author of as many as thirteen shoemaker ballads—including "A New Song in Praise of the Gentle-Craft" discussed above—and claimed the status of unofficial poet laureate to the shoemaker's heritage. Yet, as McShane asks, was Rigby really the voice of a working artisan or was he more of a literary persona? His ballads drew on a range of classical and literary traditions, referenced many other printed works, and closely followed the established conventions of commercial ballad writing. It seems likely, she concludes, that even if the real Rigby lay at the root of these ballad efforts, they were probably adapted, embellished, and "workshopped" by printers and publishers to enhance their commercial appeal. Publishers clearly thought that there was a substantial market for this type of literature, then, and that presenting it as emanating from the pen of an actual shoemaker would contribute to its popularity and salability. The *idea* of the artisanal author seems to have had purchase irrespective of its reality and may reflect consumers' desire to purchase an occupational ballad that they at least thought was written by a genuine worker in their trade.

25. "Round Boyes Indeed, or The Shoomakers Holy-day. Being a very pleasant new Ditty, To fit both Country, Towne and Citie, Delightfull to peruse in every degree, Come gallant Gentlemen, hansell from you let me see" (1632), PL, Pepys 1.442-443, EBBA 20208; Martin Parker, "The Good Fellowes Best Beloved, Now if you will know what that should bee, Ile tell you 'tis called good Ipse hee: 'Tis that which some people do love in some measure, some for their profit and some for their pleasure" (1634–58), British Library (hereafter BL), Roxburghe 1.516-517, C.20.f.7.516-517, EBBA 30346.

26. See, for example, Martin Parker, "The Three Merry Cobblers, Who tell how the case with them doth stand, How they are still on the mending hand" (1623–61), BL, Roxburghe 1.408-409, C.20.f.7.408-409, EBBA 30279.

27. Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640* (Cambridge, 1991), 324.

28. McShane, "'Ne sutor ultra crepidam.'"

Another possible artisanal author is Thomas Lanfire. Lanfire has at least a dozen ballads attributed to him, mostly dating from the late 1670s. Indeed, he appears to have achieved some degree of celebrity as a ballad author, and the acrostic on his "A Warning-Piece for All Wicked Livers" suggests that his name carried some "brand value" when it came to sales (fig. 1).[29] Lanfire's reputation was not principally as an "artisan author" like Rigby but as a fairly conventional moralist: he condemned drunkenness and prodigality, and lamented the decline of plain dealing while also dabbling a bit with romance ballads and writing an account of a monstrous birth. He did, however, write a couple of distinctive cloth-worker ballads. The first of these was "The Clothiers Delight," printed in the late 1670s.[30] It is best described as a social complaint ballad—it is set to the tune of "Packington's Pound," a common choice for such ballads—but it takes the form of an ostensibly celebratory occupational ballad praising clothiers (the cloth merchants at the apex of the clothing trade, who were not themselves engaged in the manufacturing process). It opens in mock celebration of clothiers:

> Of all sorts of callings that in England be,
> There is none that liveth so gallant as we;
> Our Trading maintains us as brave as a Knight,
> We live at our pleasure, and taketh delight:
> We heapeth up riches and treasure great store,
> Which we get by griping and grinding the poor,
> And this is a way for to fill up our purse,
> Although we do get it with many a Curse.

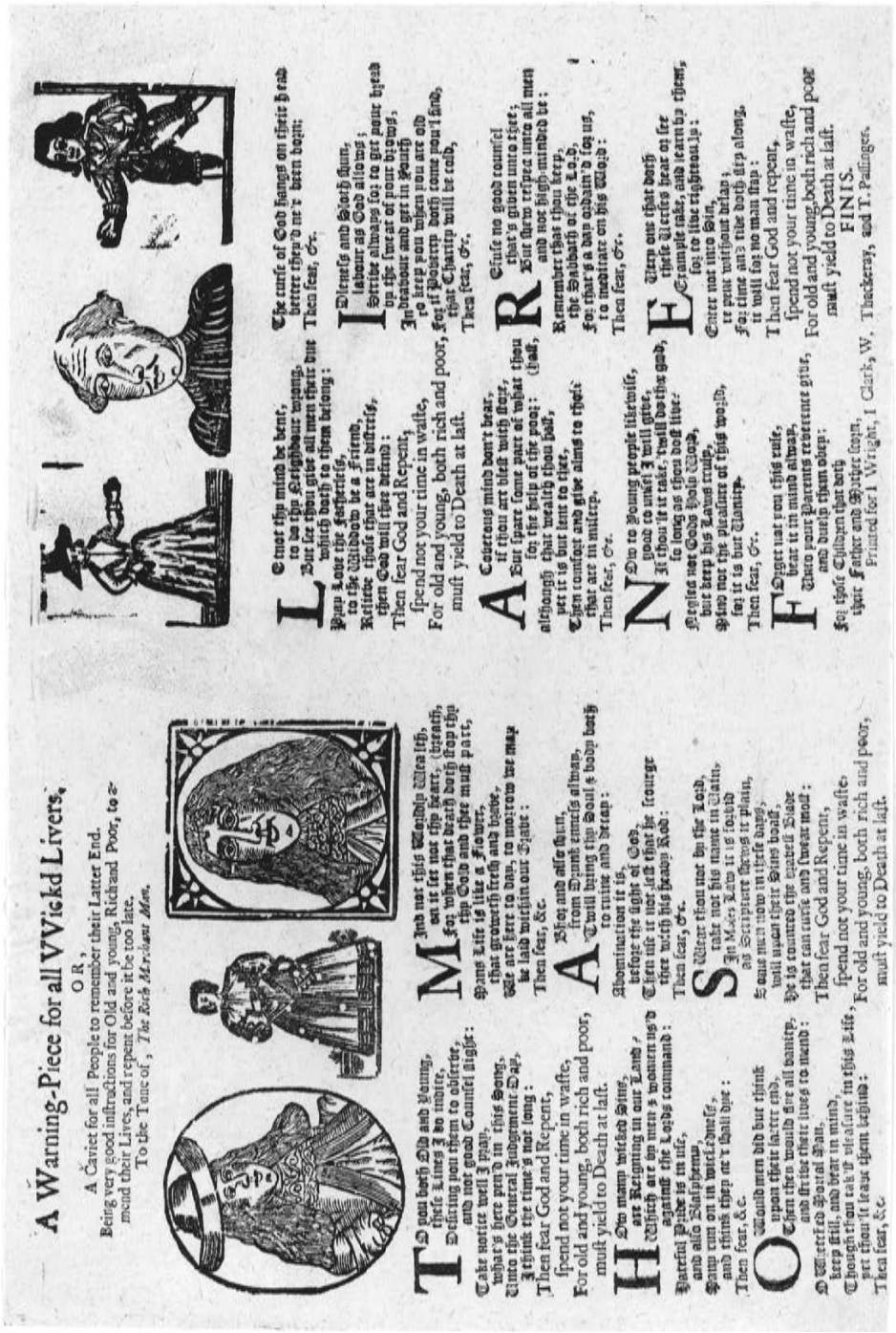
The "griping and grinding" of the poor, described in the remainder of the ballad, was the depressing of the wages of various cloth-workers (weavers, spinners, fullers, and combers) to increase the profits of the cloth merchants. The exploitation is summed up in the final verse, wherein the clothiers declare:

> Our Work-men do work hard, but we live at ease,
> We go when we will, and come when we please:
> We hoard up our bags of silver and Gold,
> But conscience and charity with us is cold.

The ballad, then, is quite a hard-hitting critique of exploitation in the cloth-working trade.

29. Thomas Lanfire, "A Warning-Piece for All Wicked Livers, or, A Caviet for all People to remember their Latter End. Being very good Instructions for Old and young, Rich and Poor, to amend their Lives, and repent before it be too late" (1681–84?), Houghton Library, Harvard University, 25242.67, 2.202, EBBA 35396.

30. Thomas Lanfire, "The Clothiers Delight: or, The Rich Mens Joy, and the Poor Mens Sorrow. Wherein is exprest the craftiness and subtilty of many Clothiers in England, by beating down their Work-mens wages. Combers, Weavers, and Spinners, for little gains, Doth Earn their money by taking of hard pains" (1674–79), BL, Roxburghe 4.35, C.20.f.10.35, EBBA 31146.


A Warning-Piece for all Wicked Livers,
OR,
A Caveat for all People to remember their Latter End.
Being very good instructions for Old and young, Richard Poor, to amend their Lives, and repent before it be too late.
To the Tune of, The Rich Merchant Man.
Then fear, &c.
Then fear God and Repent,
Then fear God and Repent,
Then fear God and Repent,

The root of Lanfire's opprobrium is hinted at by his other cloth-worker ballad, "The Taunton Maids Delight, Or, Hey for the honest Woosted-Comber."[31] This ballad falls into the category, described earlier, of considerations of occupational types as potential marriage partners. The Taunton maid in question dismisses the advances of a barber, miller, smith, tailor, and shoemaker to settle on an honest wool comber, as "No other tradesman can with him compare." Indeed, the ballad lauds the comber in terms that, as we have seen, were conventional in celebratory occupational ballads: he is brave and willing to go to battle, and he is renowned by his coworkers as a good fellow who will freely spend on strong beer and alehouse cheer (though the ballad notes that he only tarries in the alehouse for a couple of hours before returning to work, which is in keeping with Lanfire's condemnations of excessive "good fellowship" elsewhere in his ballads). His sexual prowess is not obviously praised (this would seem out of character with Lanfire's generally quite straitlaced moralizing and romance ballads), but the comber is true to his lover, showering her with kisses and spending time on the green grass with her in sweet felicity. So the ballad combines a celebration of cloth-workers (in fact, weaver and wool comber are used interchangeably in places in the ballad) with the "suitable spouse" subgenre.

What makes this ballad quite distinctive from others in these genres, however, is that its praise is specific to a location. The title clarifies that this is a *Taunton* maid, and the ballad concludes with a commendation of the cloth workers of that town: "God bless the combers and weavers both / that in Taunton doth dwell." It also praises "those in Milverton," a nearby town. Why this celebrating of cloth workers specifically in Taunton and a neighboring town? In another of Lanfire's ballads—a condemnation of good fellowship entitled "The Good Fellows Consideration"—we get a snippet of clarifying biographical information about Lanfire. The ballad claims as author one Thomas Lanfire of Watchett in Somerset, a coastal town about fifteen miles from Taunton.[32] Of course, Lanfire may also have been to some extent a literary persona: a character in the mold of a plain-speaking moralizing country man come to the capital to denounce vice and dishonest dealing. But it certainly seems likely that there was a real individual behind these ballads, especially the cloth-worker ballads. That is not to say that Lanfire was necessarily an artisan author—there is no evidence that he worked in the cloth trades—but it is highly plausible that he had close connections to the cloth trade in Somerset, where he purportedly lived. If "The Taunton Maids Delight" was to some extent an occupational ballad that grew out of, and was intended to celebrate, an

31. Thomas Lanfire, "The Taunton Maids Delight, or, Hey for the honest Woosted-Comber. In Taunton Town a Maid doth dwell, Who loves a Woosted-comber very well, In praise of him she doth declare, No other Tradesman can with him compare. All Sweethearts that doth come she does refuse, Only a Woosted-Comber she doth chuse, To him she wisheth good prosperity, For 'tis a Comber must her Husband be" (1672–96), National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), Crawford.EB.1420, EBBA 34082.

32. Thomas Lanfire, "The Good Fellows Consideration, Or The bad Husbands Amendment. Here in this Ballad you may see, What 'tis a bad Husband to be, For drunkenness most commonly Brings many unto poverty. And when a man is mean and bare, Friends will be scarce both far and near, Then in your youth keep money in store, Lest in old age you do grow poor" (1672–96), NLS, Crawford.EB.435, EBBA 32791.

actual group of workers, we might also read "The Clothiers Delight" in this light. While in part a social complaint ballad that simply echoed many tropes of its genre, it can also be read as a ballad grounded in the lived experience of exploitation in the Somerset cloth-working trade. Whether or not Lanfire was himself an artisan, his occupational ballads do appear to have been informed, at least indirectly, by the daily lives of an actual group of workers, and this may have contributed to these ballads' appeal. Workers may well have wanted to purchase ballads that they thought were composed by "one of their own."

If the existence of bona fide artisanal authors of broadside ballads is difficult to verify, we might instead compare printed occupational ballads with the manuscript compositions of one undoubted artisan author: Joseph Bufton. Bufton was a wool comber from the Essex parish of Coggeshall, known to historians for a series of almanacs he kept in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, on the blank pages of which he jotted down notes recording various local and national events as well as verse compositions relating to his trade.[33] These include verses in praise "Of worthy Blase the founder of our art" that he had picked up in nearby Colchester as well as verses of his "own making." In terms of content, these compositions shared some features with the laudatory ballads we have already discussed: Bufton praises the bravery of fullers and combers, celebrates their origin myths, and declares their loyalty to "great James," exclaiming "God Save our royall King." Bufton's occupational verses did not, however, make it into print, and they tend to be more concerned with the practical issues of trade-company organization than were the printed variety. He was keen to encourage his fellow tradesmen to be vigilant in excluding strangers from the trade. His principal emphasis, however, was on the charitable reputation of his fellow workers, in part because the verses were intended to encourage them to establish a common purse to help members of the trade who had fallen on hard times.[34] If the works of this artisanal author tended to be more practical, insular, and earnest than printed occupational ballads, they do highlight that songs—or perhaps in this instance poetry, for Bufton does not specify any tunes to accompany his rhyming verse—could play an important role in workers' expression of occupational identity. Indeed, Bufton's verses were intended to be performed for and consumed by his coworkers. He records performing one of his compositions on "guild day morning," and it appears as though another was intended for performance at a meeting to discuss the establishment of a common purse. The fact that the latter was intended to persuade his brethren to proceed with this scheme indicates that occupational verse could play a very direct role in the expression and development of more formal occupational bonds.

Is there proof, then, that printed occupational ballads might have played a similar role in the expression of occupational identity, by being performed by actual groups

33. For more on Bufton, see Henry French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England, 1600–1750* (Oxford, 2007), 244–50.

34. Bufton's songs can be found in his notebooks: Notebooks of Joseph Bufton of Coggeshall, c.1677–1716, T/A 156/1, vol. 2 and vol. 3, fols. 8–13 at 9, Essex Record Office. I am grateful to Brodie Waddell for sharing transcriptions of the songs.

of workers? We do have some evidence that occupational ballads figured in the formal rituals and activities of occupational guilds and companies. In her work on London guilds, Jasmine Kilburn-Toppin has found widespread instances of guild authorities paying ballad singers to perform on feast days, especially those of the patron saint of the trade, such as the Armourers' Company on St. George's Day.[35] In some cases these guilds had their own company songs—as did the Vintners' Company—perhaps penned by trade poet laureates like Bufton, but no doubt in other cases printed ballads were used.[36] Indeed, Rigby's "The Shooe-Maker's Triumph," the ballad tells us, was a version of a song "as it was sung at a General Assembly of Shooe-makers, on the 25th of Octob. 1695, being St. Crispin['s Day]."[37]

If occupational songs and poems, of both the printed and homespun variety, played a part in the articulation of occupational identity at feasts and festive occasions, they may also have facilitated more routine expressions of occupational bonds in the alehouse. Many occupational ballads, especially those of a celebratory nature, were clearly intended for consumption by workers in an alehouse context. Martin Parker's "The Three Merry Cobblers," for instance, calls on tradesmen to

> Come follow follow me,
> to th Alehouse weele march all three,
> Leave Aule[,] Last[,] Threed, and Lether,
> And lets goe alto[g]ether,
> Our trade excells most trades ith land.[38]

Lawrence Price's "Good Ale for My Money," which praises a range of tradesmen, also suggests it was intended for performance in an alehouse. The final verse states:

> Thus to conclude my verses rude,
> would some good-fellowes here
> Would joyne together pence a peece
> to buy the singer beere:
> I trust none of this company
> will be herewith offended,
> Therefore call for your Jugs a peece
> and drink to him that pend it.[39]

35. Email correspondence with the author, April 1, 2014. See also Jasmine Kilburn-Toppin, "Crafting Artisanal Identities in Early Modern London: The Spatial, Material and Social Practices of Guild Communities c.1560–1640" (PhD diss., Royal College of Art, 2013).

36. For the Vintners' Company song, see MS15378, London Metropolitan Archives. My thanks to Jasmine Kilburn-Toppin for this reference.

37. Richard Rigby, "The Shooe-Maker's Triumph, Being A Song in Praise of the Gentle-Craft, shewing how Royal Princes, Sons of Kings, Lords, and great Commanders, have been Shooe-makers of old, to the Honour of this ancient Trade; as it was sung at a General Assembly of Shooe-makers, on the 25th of Octob. 1695, being St. Crispin" (1695), PL, Pepys 5.427, EBBA 22349.

38. Martin Parker, "The Three Merry Cobblers."

39. Lawrence Price, "Good Ale for My Money. The Good-fellowes resolution of strong Ale, That cures his nose from looking pale" (1645), BL, Roxburghe 1.138-139, C.20.f.7.138-139, EBBA 30085.

This plea for a drink, and the fact that the ballad targeted a range of occupations, suggests that the ballad was pitched at a diverse alehouse crowd, rather than the attendees at a guild celebration. Of course, historians are aware of the more general link between ballad performance and alehouses, something attested to by both contemporary observers and the visual evidence from the period that depicts broadsheets pasted on alehouse walls or being bellowed aloud by hawkers and customers.[40] Woodcut images from occupational ballads also reinforced the connection between ballads, alehouses, and tradesmen in particular. "The Bonny Black-Smiths Delight" juxtaposes a smithy and an alehouse, and "Great Britains Delight," very likely a Rigby ballad, portrays an alehouse scene and a shoemaker's workshop side by side (figs. 2 and 3).[41] This evidence from within both the ballad texts and their woodcuts suggests that occupational ballads were intended for performance not just in guild halls on festive occasions but also more routinely in the less formal environment of the alehouse.

FIGURE 2. Detail from "The Bonny Black-Smiths Delight" (1663–74). Pepys 4.264, EBBA 21925. By permission of the Pepys Library, Magdalene College Cambridge.

FIGURE 3. Detail from Richard Rigby, "Great Britains Delight" (1689). Pepys 2,242, EBBA 20856. By permission of the Pepys Library, Magdalene College Cambridge.

40. See Mark Hailwood, *Alehouses and Good Fellowship in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, U.K., 2014), 126–29.

41. "The Bonny Black-Smiths Delight."

Ultimately, of course, documentation of the authorship and performance of broadside ballads remains frustratingly elusive, and we are all too often left with the "texts but not the contexts" in which they were produced and consumed.[42] That said, I hope this discussion has demonstrated that broadside ballads are nonetheless an important source for the exploration of occupational identity in early modern England. They contributed to and reflected the wide range of characteristics that contemporaries associated with different occupational types in this period—some of the key building blocks out of which identities were constructed—and many were designed explicitly as heroic portrayals of particular occupational identities. We can be less sure that such printed broadsides were ever authored by actual artisans, but the *idea* that they were—or at least the notion that they were penned by men with connections to the trade portrayed—does seem to have appealed to consumers. Moreover, we know that genuine artisans such as Joseph Bufton composed celebratory verses about their trades that were performed at guild events, and there is evidence that printed ballads could fulfill a similar function in the expression of occupational identities, in both the guild hall and the alehouse. In all of these ways, then, broadside ballads played their part in the process of constructing occupational identities and need to be recognized as a valuable source for historians seeking to more fully appreciate the ways in which many contemporaries "looked to their work as the source of their sense of identity."[43]

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42. Adam Fox, "Ballads, Libels and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England," *Past & Present* 145 (1994): 48.

43. Thomas, *The Ends of Life*, 106–8.